

## Sophisticated Strategist: General George A. Lincoln and the Defeat of Japan, 1944–45

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"If we keep in mind that war springs from some political purpose," Clausewitz wrote a century and one-half ago, "it is natural that the prime cause of its existence will remain the supreme consideration in conducting it. . . . Policy, then, will permeate all military operations, and . . . will have a continuous influence upon them." Historians have long claimed that American strategists in World War II ignored this essential relationship between national policy and military strategy. Emerging immediately after the war, this school of criticism argues that in the shaping of Allied strategy, military considerations consistently prevailed over political ones. Typical of the school is Bernard Brodie, who explains Allied strategy in terms of "a most interesting contest between . . . British supporters of the Clausewitzian ideals of keeping political aims always at the forefront of strategic consideration, and American supporters inclined to the traditional military preference for keeping them out altogether."<sup>1</sup>

According to this critique, the American apolitical perspective dominated Allied strategy during most of the war in the Pacific and exerted greater influence in Europe as American participation in that theater increased. Further, these critics conclude that allowing this perspective to determine strategy was extremely costly in the end. American strategic naïveté may not have impeded the winning of the war, but it certainly contributed to the losing of the peace.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret, rev. ed. (Princeton, 1984), 87; Bernard Brodie, *War and Politics* (New York, 1973), 37.

<sup>2</sup>For the prevalence of military considerations see Kent Roberts Greenfield, *American Strategy in World War II: A Reconsideration* (Baltimore, 1963), 23; Louis Morton, "National Policy and National Strategy," *Virginia Quarterly Review* 36 (Winter 1960): 9–13; Maurice Matloff, *Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare, 1943–1944* (Washington, 1959), 39–41, 286–88; and Ray S. Cline, *Washington Command Post: The Operations Division* (Washington, 1951), 105–6, 312–32. The argument that strategic naïveté lost the peace is made in Hanson Baldwin, *Great Mistakes of the War* (New York, 1949), 1–13. Samuel P. Huntington reaches the same conclusion with a very different argument that exaggerates the

Such explanations underestimate the sophistication of American military strategists. Well schooled in their study of Clausewitzian principles at Leavenworth and Newport, the American Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) understood clearly the pervasive and continuous influence of policy on strategy. Mark Stoler's 1977 study of Anglo-American military planning for the cross-Channel invasion of Europe first challenged such traditional views of American strategic naïveté in the European theater. A more recent study of the war against Japan argues that American national policy influenced military strategy in the Pacific even more strongly than in Europe.<sup>3</sup>

In the war with Japan the JCS were well aware of the inseparability of the political and military aspects of wartime strategy. They sought systematically to identify and understand the political aims of the war, to determine military objectives that would satisfy those aims and to distribute resources accordingly, and to establish a coherent strategic plan to fulfill the goals of policymakers and military planners alike. In the Pacific war the United States was largely insulated from the distractions of coalition warfare that complicated the task of fighting the war in Europe. Although thirteen Allied nations were banded together against Japan, the United States had a virtually free hand in strategic direction. As a result the JCS—and especially influential army strategists—had far less difficulty reconciling military strategy with national policy aims and other political factors.<sup>4</sup>

This revised view of American strategy making and the important part played by army strategists in attempting to reconcile military strategy with national policy is supported by an examination of the role of Brigadier General George A. Lincoln in the American debate in 1944 and 1945 over strategy for defeating Japan. As chief of the Strategy and Policy Group, Operations Division of the War Department General Staff, Lincoln was the senior strategist for Army Chief of Staff General George C. Marshall. Ranked fourth in the West Point class of 1929, Lincoln won a Rhodes Scholarship and studied philosophy, politics, and economics at Oxford's Magdalen College from 1929 to 1933. After service as an engineer company commander in Colorado constructing Civilian Conservation Corps camps, he taught economics, government, and history at West Point from 1937 to 1941. Following Pearl Harbor he was assigned to London as a logistics planner in General John H. C. Lee's headquarters until 1943, when he was posted to Marshall's Operations Division as deputy chief of the Strategy and Policy

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independence of the JCS and its influence on Roosevelt. See Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Practice of Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge, MA, 1957), 315–44; and a convincing critique of Huntington in Russell F. Weigley, "Military Strategy and Civilian Leadership," in *Historical Dimensions of National Security Problems*, ed. Klaus Knorr (Lawrence, KS, 1976), 38–77.

<sup>3</sup>Mark A. Stoler, *The Politics of the Second Front: American Military Planning and Diplomacy in Coalition Warfare, 1941–1943* (Westport, 1977), 155–68; Charles F. Brower, "The Joint Chiefs of Staff and National Policy: American Strategy and the War with Japan, 1943–1945" (Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1987).

<sup>4</sup>For evidence of American strategic predominance in the Pacific war see D. Clayton James, "American and Japanese Strategies in the Pacific War," in *Makers of Modern Strategy from Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age*, ed. Peter Paret (Princeton, 1986), 722–23.

Group. Appointed chief in November 1944 and promoted to brigadier general (at age thirty-eight he was the youngest army general on the General Staff), he attended most of the crucial wartime conferences of 1944 and 1945—Quebec, Yalta, and Potsdam—prompting him later to note ruefully that he had “attended most of the wrong meetings since Calvary.”<sup>5</sup>

After the war, Lincoln served as Eisenhower’s senior planner, as military adviser to Secretary of State James F. Byrnes, and as a professor in and later head of the Department of Social Sciences at West Point from 1947 until his retirement from active duty in 1969. President Dwight D. Eisenhower, another alumnus of the War Department Operations Division, called him to Washington to serve on the Gaither and Rockefeller report panels. In 1969, President Richard M. Nixon appointed him director of the Office of Military Preparedness and a member of the National Security Council. He held these positions until his death in 1975. As Ernest R. May and Gregory Treverton have pointed out, in all these capacities Lincoln selected, trained, and served as mentor to a whole generation of army and air force staff officers, who over the years came to be known as the “Lincoln brigade.”<sup>6</sup>

As Marshall’s strategist and the army representative on the Joint Staff Planners (JSP), Lincoln was the principal War Department planner for American military campaigns in Europe and Asia, including the invasion of Japan.<sup>7</sup> In addition, in the summer of 1945 he was deeply involved in efforts by elements within the American government to induce the Japanese to surrender by clarifying the meaning of unconditional surrender. Because he occupied a central position in the JCS planning machinery, he exerted a significant influence upon overall American strategy. Fortunately, he brought to his tasks a remarkably refined strategic perspective. Ambassador W. Averell Harriman later recalled that Lincoln “understood that war was not an operation detached from the political life of a nation. It was, in fact, an expression of an essential political objective, and therefore, had to be conducted with political aims in mind.”<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Amos A. Jordan, Obituary of George A. Lincoln, *Assembly* 34 (March 1976): 121–22; Wolfgang Saxon, “Brig. Gen. George Lincoln Dies: Top Military Planner Was 67,” *New York Times*, 26 May 1975; Announcement of Retirement of Brigadier General George A. Lincoln, General Orders No. 14, Headquarters, U.S. Military Academy, 18 January 1969, Lincoln Cullum File (8490), USMA Library, West Point, New York.

<sup>6</sup>In addition to the sources cited in the previous footnote see Ernest R. May and Gregory Treverton, “Defence Relationships: American Perspectives,” in *The “Special Relationship”: Anglo-American Relations since 1945*, ed. William Roger Louis and Hedley Bull (Oxford, 1986), 162.

<sup>7</sup>The JSP was the joint committee responsible for reviewing all important actions under consideration by the JCS. It guided the efforts of the joint committee system, keeping it in harmony with JCS commitments and expectations. Membership included two army planners (chief, S&P Group and assistant chief of staff, Plans, Air Staff) and two navy planners (assistant chief of staff, Plans, Office of the Commander in Chief, U.S. Fleet [COMINCH] and the assistant planning officer [Air], Plans, COMINCH). See Cline, *Washington Command Post*, 239, 239n.

<sup>8</sup>Cited in Roger H. Nye, “George A. Lincoln: Architect of National Security,” in *Issues of National Security in the 1970’s: Essays Presented to Colonel George A. Lincoln on His Sixtieth Birthday*, ed. Amos A. Jordan, Jr. (New York, 1967), 9.

When Lincoln assumed his duties as chief of the Strategy and Policy Group in 1944, two important and related political considerations were guiding the strategic calculations of the JCS in the war with Japan. One of those considerations was publicly enunciated at the Casablanca Conference in January 1943, when President Franklin D. Roosevelt and Prime Minister Winston S. Churchill announced the policy of unconditional surrender. "Peace can come to the world," Roosevelt told a joint press conference, "only by a total elimination of German and Japanese war power. This involves the simple formula of placing the objective of the war in terms of an unconditional surrender by Germany, Italy and Japan."<sup>9</sup>

The JCS welcomed Roosevelt's announcement, because unconditional surrender was consistent with the American preference for wars of annihilation. Yet they did not view the unconditional surrender of Japan solely as a military objective. On the contrary, they clearly interpreted Roosevelt's announcement as a political guideline that they were meant to follow as they shaped military strategy. The announcement defined the kind of victory Roosevelt wanted the JCS to obtain and was thus very much a commentary on the nature of the postwar world the president sought to create.<sup>10</sup>

Roosevelt's "simple formula" served many complex purposes. While he intended to use the goal of unconditional surrender as a wartime rallying point for the disparate members of the Grand Alliance, he also saw it as a prerequisite for preserving the alliance after the war. Not coincidentally, the JCS first learned of the proposal to demand unconditional surrender in the context of shoring up Russian morale following the postponement of the long-promised second front. An Anglo-American commitment to see the war through to total victory might alleviate Soviet fears of being exploited by the West after having carried the burden of the Eastern Front. Assuaging such fears might have important military benefits—the Allies might be able to persuade the Soviets not to make a separate peace with Germany, for example, or might secure Soviet assistance in the Pacific war—but the potential postwar benefits were even more significant. By committing themselves to total victory, the Allies were laying the groundwork for establishing enduring friendly relationships.<sup>11</sup>

The second consideration that was guiding the deliberations of the JCS was the need to maintain the commitment of the American people to the president's grand strategy. The path to victory in a multifront, multi-theater

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<sup>9</sup>"President Roosevelt's Press Conference Notes," 22–23 January 1943, U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, The Conferences at Washington, 1941–1942, and Casablanca, 1943* (Washington, 1968), 837 (hereafter *FRUS*, with volume title).

<sup>10</sup>Russell F. Weigley, *The American Way of War: A History of United States Military Strategy and Policy* (New York, 1973), 325; Leon V. Sigal, *Fighting to a Finish: The Politics of War Termination in the United States and Japan, 1945* (Ithaca, 1988), 102; Thomas D. Parrish, *Roosevelt and Marshall: Partners in Politics and War* (New York, 1989), 339–41.

<sup>11</sup>JCS minutes of a meeting at the White House, 7 January 1943, *FRUS, Casablanca*, 506; Anne Armstrong, *Unconditional Surrender: The Impact of the Casablanca Policy on World War II* (New Brunswick, 1961), 34–41; John Lewis Gaddis, *The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 1941–1947* (New York, 1972), 8–10; Raymond G. O'Connor, *Diplomacy for Victory: FDR and Unconditional Surrender* (New York, 1971), 100–104.

war promised to be a tortuous and costly one, requiring great sacrifice on the home front. Roosevelt's special counsel, Judge Samuel I. Rosenman, recalled after the war that the president "genuinely worried that Americans might grow complacent about the war and thus prolong it and even endanger the ultimate victory." He expressed that concern "again and again in private conversation." Facing both domestic indifference and an enormously complex wartime task, he sought to mobilize public support for his war aims and to preserve his wide latitude in the conduct of the war. Unconditional surrender thus provided a simple and unobjectionable goal around which to rally an unsteady home front.<sup>12</sup>

Concern about the ability of the American people to sustain a protracted war directly influenced the strategic calculations of the JCS in the war against Japan and was further evidence of their Clausewitzian perspective on waging war. The JCS understood that the "paradoxical trinity" of war—the relation between the government (with its political agenda), the military instrument, and the national will—needed to be roughly in balance and that to underestimate the importance of any one of these would put victory at risk.<sup>13</sup>

Accepting unconditional surrender as the Roosevelt administration's political aim, the JCS sought to employ the preponderant resources of the United States and its allies to that end in a manner that would sustain the support of the American public. General Marshall had an especially keen understanding of the strategic significance of national will. "A democracy," he told his biographer after the war, "cannot fight a Seven Years War." The Axis powers could force their people to fight on indefinitely; the Allies would have to meet a timetable. Marshall appreciated that as a democratic strategist he had far less freedom of action than did his totalitarian counterparts, for he had to show clear evidence of progress toward his government's strategic aim in order to sustain popular support. The awareness of the need for a strategy that delivered incremental dividends significantly influenced Marshall's strategic perspective and choices throughout the war.<sup>14</sup>

Marshall's navy counterpart on the JCS, Admiral Ernest J. King, had similar concerns. Addressing Pacific strategy directly, King was characteristically more blunt than Marshall about the stamina and commitment of the American home front. His fear about the war, he told a group of reporters privately in 1944, was that "the American people will weary of it quickly, and that pressure at home will force a negotiated peace, before the

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<sup>12</sup>Samuel I. Rosenman, *Working with Roosevelt* (New York, 1952), 385, 388. For a detailed discussion of the relationship between unconditional surrender and public opinion see John L. Chase, "Unconditional Surrender Reconsidered," in *Essays on the History of American Foreign Relations*, ed. Lawrence E. Gelfand (New York, 1972), 366–80.

<sup>13</sup>Clausewitz, *On War*, 89; Michael Howard, "The Forgotten Dimensions of Strategy," *Foreign Affairs* 57 (Summer 1979): 977–80.

<sup>14</sup>Marshall interview, 25 July 1949, cited in Matloff, *Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare*, 5; B. H. Liddell Hart first developed the arguments about democratic strategists working on a "narrower margin of time and cost" in his analysis of the strategy of Grant and Sherman during the American Civil War. See Liddell Hart, *Strategy*, 2d rev. ed. (New York, 1967), 150. I am indebted to Colonel Paul L. Miles for framing this concept in terms of "incremental dividends."

Japs are really licked." The specter of "a long, plodding, costly war that will stretch out for years to come" haunted King and the JCS throughout the war, especially in 1944 and 1945.<sup>15</sup>

These two political considerations, therefore, and not "strictly military considerations," provided the context for the Joint Chiefs' formulation of the final strategy for the defeat of Japan. Unconditional surrender defined the national aim and in the view of the JCS helped to strengthen the American commitment to the war. Nonetheless, the JCS were also aware that they were constrained to devise a strategy that delivered incremental dividends to the American people to reward their investment of confidence and support.

Although American strategists had no real quarrel with the political aim of unconditional surrender, by 1944 they were locked in a bitter debate over the final strategy for the defeat of Japan. At the heart of this debate was one question: Which strategy—assault or siege—would best reconcile the desire to force Japan to surrender unconditionally at the earliest possible date with the need to minimize casualties and maintain public support? The JCS continued to debate the question of strategy almost to the end of the war. The debate was in part a reflection of interservice differences about the nature of warfare, but more important, it illustrated the consistent attention that prominent American military planners gave to political considerations in shaping their strategy for the defeat of Japan. Considerations about how best to obtain speedy unconditional surrender clashed with anxieties about excessive American casualties and the steadiness of the home front and framed the JCS debate in increasingly familiar political terms.<sup>16</sup>

Lincoln and the Joint Staff Planners submitted their views on operations for the defeat of Japan to the JCS in late 1944. The resolution of the Luzon-Formosa debate in early October had ended the long and bitter dispute between proponents of the central Pacific axis and those who advocated approaching Japan by breaching the Bismarck Barrier from the south along the New Guinea-Mindanao line. In October 1944 the JCS directed General Douglas A. MacArthur to invade Luzon and ordered Admiral Chester W. Nimitz into the Ryukyus and Bonins. Both operations were scheduled for early 1945. American planners now wrestled with how best to bring about Japan's speedy capitulation from the Ryukyus.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>Perry to Barnett, 18 February 1944, in Glen C. H. Perry, "Dear Bart"; *Washington Views of World War II* (Westport, 1982), 249.

<sup>16</sup>Most works on this debate stress its interservice nature. See especially Cline, *Washington Command Post*, 333–51; Henry G. Morgan, "Planning the Defeat of Japan: A Study of Total War Strategy," manuscript prepared in the Office of Military History, Washington, DC, pp. 98–99, 145–68, USMA Library; Grace P. Hayes, *The History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in World War II: The War against Japan* (Annapolis, 1982), 653–59, 701–7; and Ronald H. Spector, *Eagle against the Sun: The American War with Japan* (New York, 1985), 532–61. The official history of army strategic planning in 1943–44 cautiously suggests the army's sensitivity to political considerations but does not pursue the question to the end of the war. See Matloff, *Strategic Planning for Coalition War*, 487–89.

<sup>17</sup>JCS to MacArthur and Nimitz, CM-OUT-40782, 3 October 1944, Records of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Record Group 218, CCS 382 Pacific Ocean Area (6-10-43), sec 9, National Archives, Washington, DC (hereafter RG 218, with filing information). For a succinct summary of the debate over which Pacific axis should constitute the main attack see James,

Finding a bold stroke straight onto the Tokyo Plain too risky, the JSP recommended the seizure of an intermediate objective on Kyushu in September 1945 (Operation OLYMPIC), to be followed three months later by an attack against the industrial heart of Japan on the main island of Honshu (Operation CORONET). Their proposal reflected American sensitivity to the need to maintain the tempo of operations against Japan in order to sustain the home front and testified to their belief that the United States would have to invade to bring about Japan's unconditional surrender.<sup>18</sup>

Both Admiral King and General H. H. Arnold, the army air force representative on the JCS, questioned the conclusions of the JSP report. One of King's planners explained that King felt they were "rushing into Honshu" without paying sufficient attention to the air-sea blockade and the erosion of Japan's will to resist. Arnold argued that the United States needed to establish more air bases from which to conduct an intensive aerial bombardment of Japan prior to any invasion. King and Arnold based their arguments on the premise that the siege-bombardment strategy could deliver unconditional surrender without an invasion. As a result of their criticism the JCS returned the report to the JSP for further consideration.<sup>19</sup>

Lincoln and the JSP spent nearly three weeks restudying the issue. On 23 November they sent the JCS a new report. It revealed the controlling hold that the idea of speedy unconditional surrender had on the planning staff. The JSP acknowledged that their proposed amphibious operations and subsequent land campaigns presented an immense challenge and agreed fully that there was a need for "unremitting" preparatory naval and air operations, but they remained insistent that invasion was the appropriate strategy. There was no question in their minds that the operations proposed by King and Arnold were merely "operations preliminary to the decisive operation," the invasion of Japan itself. What they feared most was an undue preoccupation with preliminary operations, which would delay the invasion. Believing that sufficient resources were already available to accomplish the "softening of Japan," the JSP recommended against additional major operations to lower Japan's ability and will to resist. Given the scarcity of Allied resources, implementing such operations would only delay the invasion of Honshu beyond December 1945.<sup>20</sup>

In December the JCS forwarded the new report to the Combined Chiefs of Staff without fully endorsing its recommendations on invasion. Part of their

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"American and Japanese Strategies in the Pacific War." The Luzon-Formosa debate is best detailed in Robert R. Smith, "Luzon versus Formosa," in *Command Decisions*, ed. Kent R. Greenfield (Washington, 1960), 461-77.

<sup>18</sup>JPS Report, JCS 924/5, "Operations for the Defeat of Japan," 27 October 1944, Records of the War Department General and Special Staffs, Record Group 165, ABC 381 Japan (8-27-42), sec 7, National Archives (hereafter RG 165, with filing information).

<sup>19</sup>King memorandum, JCS 924/6, "Operations for the Defeat of Japan," 3 November 1944, Arnold memorandum, JCS 924/7, "Operations for the Defeat of Japan," 6 November 1944, and memorandum of telephone conversation between Brigadier General Frank Roberts and Rear Admiral D. B. Duncan, 3 November 1944, 1055 hours, all in RG 165, ABC 381 Japan (8-27-42), sec 7.

<sup>20</sup>JPS Report, JCS 924/8, "Operations for the Defeat of Japan," 23 November 1944, RG 165, ABC 381 Japan (8-27-42), sec 7.

reluctance to support those recommendations stemmed from pessimism about the slowing pace of the European war and the effect a long war in Europe would have on the war against Japan. The German Ardennes offensive of December 1944 had a particularly sobering impact on American strategists who were considering the Pacific timetable. By New Year's Day 1945, for example, Leahy saw "little prospect of obtaining from [Japan] an unconditional surrender in the year that lies before us." Ten days later the JCS diverted the last two fully trained infantry divisions in the United States to Europe, divisions originally scheduled to go to the Pacific in May. Leahy informed Roosevelt that the diversion was necessary because of the losses in the bitter fighting in the Ardennes. Finally, the JCS directed the JSP to reexamine the plan for operations against Japan, taking into account the possibility that "prolongation of the European war" would require "postponement of the invasion of Japan until well into 1946."<sup>21</sup>

As a proponent of a siege strategy, Admiral King was particularly enthusiastic about considering interim operations in the period between the anticipated capture of Okinawa in April and the invasion of Kyushu. Because OLYMPIC depended upon forces from Europe that would not be available for four to six months after the defeat of Germany, King proposed alternative operations in order to maintain the pressure on the Japanese and to tighten the ring around Japan. He recommended seizing either the Chusan Archipelago near the entrance to the Yangtze River, North Borneo, Hainan, or the Kurile Islands.<sup>22</sup>

Also pessimistic about progress in the European war and reluctant to lose the momentum in the Pacific, army strategists studied King's proposals seriously. By April, however, they were buoyed by steady progress in Europe and began to worry openly about what they saw as the navy's tendency to avoid concentrating upon the decisive thrust at the Japanese heartland. They disparaged King's proposal as the "round the Yellow Sea idea." Conditioned by earlier jousts with British peripheral strategists, the army resolved to learn from what they believed to be their Mediterranean errors and to concentrate on striking the decisive blow.<sup>23</sup>

In the JSP the debate now came out into the open, with the navy acknowledging "a basic difference" among the services over "the soundness of invading Japan" and asserting that "this matter will have to be decided by the President." Operations to surround Japan were "essential to our final success,"

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<sup>21</sup>JCS memorandum, CCS 417-10, "Operations for the Defeat of Japan," 1 December 1944, RG 218, CCS 381 Pacific Ocean Area (6-10-43), sec 10; Leahy memorandum for the president, 11 January 1945, Franklin D. Roosevelt Papers, President's Secretary's Files (PSF), Safe File, box 1 (American-British Chiefs of Staff), Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York; JPS Report, JCS 924/11, "Operations for the Defeat of Japan (Report for ARGONAUT)," 19 January 1945, RG 165, ABC 381 Japan (8-27-42), sec 7.

<sup>22</sup>King memorandum, JCS 1232, "Alternatives to the Campaign for the Defeat of Japan," 17 January 1945, RG 165, ABC 384 Pacific (1-17-43), sec 9.

<sup>23</sup>SS 356, "Operations after ICEBERG [Operations against Okinawa] and Prior to the Invasion of Kyushu," 23 January 1945, RG 165, ABC 384 Pacific (1-17-43), sec 9; Hull memorandum for Marshall, "Ningpo-Chusan Operation," 27 March 1945, RG 165, ABC 384 Pacific (1-17-43), sec 9.



navy planners argued. Such operations would place "a ring around Japan," preventing reinforcement from the Asian mainland, and would allow sustained "hammering at the Japanese will to resist."<sup>24</sup>

Lincoln, however, saw "no good reason to believe at present that it will be necessary to undertake preliminary operations beyond the Ryukyus before closing with the Japanese homeland." Peripheral operations would merely dissipate Allied resources and give the Japanese "a chance to wear down our forces and resources." If Japanese strength continued to decline at its current rate, it would soon be time "to strike at the industrial heart of Japan." "That is what we should be prepared to do," Lincoln declared. "Otherwise the opportunity may present itself and find us not ready. Many months are required for preparation." Lincoln believed that preparations for the invasion of Japan should be America's "primary objective" and that "the JCS should avoid tangential operations which might postpone that final objective."<sup>25</sup>

Led by Lincoln, Marshall's staff attacked the navy's position fiercely. King's strategy was based upon the premise that blockade and bombardment would isolate and weaken Japan and then deliver unconditional surrender with fewer casualties in an acceptable period of time. The army, however, argued that this encirclement strategy would commit at least the equivalent of the Kyushu force (and maybe as much as double that force) to costly and indecisive island operations. Moreover, War Department Intelligence estimated that at most the Japanese would be able to redeploy only "one division per month from the Asiatic mainland." Denying such a capability seemed to the army a return not commensurate with the expensive strategic investment of the siege strategy. Finally, and most important in the War Department calculations, King's proposed operations "would probably delay the invasion of Kyushu by 3 to 4 months." To the War Department, therefore, the choice boiled down to either Kyushu on 1 December 1945 or Chusan in November and December and Kyushu in March 1946. "The foregoing analysis," Marshall's deputy told him, "seems to show conclusively that we should for the present concentrate on going directly into Japan after the Ryukyus."<sup>26</sup>

Intelligence estimates by the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC) added strong support to the army's position. The JIC concluded that an "effective sea and air blockade . . . combined with large scale strategic bombing" would "reduce progressively [the] Japanese will to resist Allied attack" and break the Japanese will to continue the war. Nonetheless, the JIC believed that while the blockade-bombardment strategy would "inevitably" force unconditional surrender, it could not do so "within a reasonable length of time." Indeed, some analysts estimated that the period might stretch into "a great many years." A concurrent JIC study further emphasized that Japanese military and political authorities still held "the desperate hope" that the cost of continued

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<sup>24</sup>Minutes of JPS 192d meeting, 10-16 March 1945, RG 218, CCS 334 Joint Planners Meetings (9-20-43). The 192d meeting took place in seven sessions over the period 10-16 March 1945.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid.

<sup>26</sup>Hull memorandum for Marshall, "Ningpo-Chusan Operation," 27 March 1945, RG 165, ABC 384 Pacific (1-17-43), sec 9.

Japanese resistance would stimulate "disunity and war-weariness among the United Nations" and encourage a negotiated settlement. Although both studies made the tantalizing suggestion that it might be possible to "bring nearer the possibility of unconditional surrender" by clarifying its meaning, the JIC warned that it was "obviously impossible to count upon such a development." Accordingly, the JIC concluded that without an invasion of the Japanese home islands it was "probable that unconditional surrender could not be forced upon the Japanese before the middle or latter part of 1946."<sup>27</sup>

In addition to this evidence that the siege option would fail to fulfill the national aim of a speedy unconditional surrender, there were also indications that it was going to be difficult to sustain the morale of Americans at home. In late February the Office of War Information (OWI) warned Marshall and the JCS about the uneasiness of the American public over the heavy losses on Iwo Jima. American casualties there had totaled twenty thousand killed, wounded, and missing. Most alarming, the ratio of American casualties to Japanese was 1 to 1.25. Before the invasion of the Japanese homeland, the OWI felt it might be necessary to prepare the American people psychologically "for the heavy losses which undoubtedly would occur." Marshall was thinking along generally similar lines. "We are approaching one of the most difficult periods of the war," he told the Academy of Political Sciences in April. As V-E Day drew nearer, he anticipated that the "great impatience" of many Americans to return to normalcy would clash with the "stern necessity of maintaining the momentum of the war in the Pacific in order to shorten it by every possible day." Marshall confided that during this period he feared two things most: "the possibility of a general let-down in this country" and "the effect of the public reaction on the morale of the Army during this period of redeployment." A few weeks later he warned his JCS colleagues about these dangers. "War weariness in the United States," he wrote, "may demand the return home of those who have fought long and well in the European war regardless of the effect of such a return on the prosecution of the Japanese war."<sup>28</sup>

In short, from the perspective of army strategists the siege option failed in strategic terms on two important counts. First, there was strong evidence that

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<sup>27</sup>Report by the service members, Joint Intelligence Committee, JIC 266/1, "Defeat of Japan by Blockade and Bombardment," 18 April 1945, RG 165, ABC 387 Japan (2-15-45), sec 1A; Report by the JIC, JIC 268/1, "Unconditional Surrender of Japan," 25 April 1945, RG 165, ABC 387 Japan (2-15-45), sec 1A. Postwar evidence about the determination of the Japanese government and people to resist unconditional surrender can be found in Robert J. C. Butow, *Japan's Decision to Surrender* (Stanford, 1954), 95-102. The Archbishop of Tokyo told American interrogators in 1946 that "the nation would never give in. To realize that there was no hope of winning the war and the will to surrender were matters of an entirely different kind. The people had made up their minds to offer life and everything for the country." See U.S. Army Air Forces, *Mission Accomplished: Interrogations of Japanese Industrial, Military and Civil Leaders of World War II* (Washington, 1946), 97.

<sup>28</sup>Minutes of a meeting of the JCS and heads of civilian war agencies, 27 February 1945, RG 218, CCS 334 Joint Chiefs of Staff Meetings (2-2-45); Marshall address before the Academy of Political Sciences in New York City, 4 April 1945, George C. Marshall Papers, box 111, folder: 50, Marshall Research Library, Lexington, Virginia; JCS 1340, 9 May 1945, RG 218, CCS 387 Japan (5-9-45).

it put at risk the principal political objective of the war, the speedy unconditional surrender of Japan. Second, the prospect of a prolonged siege would only aggravate the skittishness of the American people and might diminish the effectiveness of the American army, which would be affected by low morale at home. Marshall became increasingly sure that only an invasion would ensure the supreme objective of the war.

Prompted by Marshall, Lincoln and the JSP thrashed out the diverging strategies once again in late April. In Clausewitzian fashion they addressed the major considerations—national war aims, the military feasibility of invasion, and estimated casualties and force requirements for each strategy—and forcefully concluded that invasion was preferable to siege. That the interservice JSP should have endorsed invasion so staunchly, particularly when the navy and army air force were firmly committed to the siege strategy, is an indication of how strong Lincoln's influence on the group must have been.<sup>29</sup>

The JSP paper showed a persistent sensitivity to policy issues. Characterizing the siege strategy as "a strategy of limited aim," the planners argued that it would likely "bring about a negotiated peace falling short of complete fulfillment of our war aims." Invasion, on the other hand, would strike "directly at the heart of the empire" and "if the threat itself did not cause capitulation, the continuation of the campaign through the full stages of invasion would result in unconditional surrender or absolute defeat." The JSP analysis of the feasibility of invasion also reflected a sensitivity to the public's feelings about long wars. "There appears to be no necessity to consume time, effort and resources on the prior seizure of additional positions from which to strengthen and augment bombardment," the planners reasoned. Lincoln himself was especially concerned about the time it would take to execute the siege strategy. In a memorandum to an army colleague he analyzed the cost of each strategy and emphasized that "one of the elements in this cost is the length of the war, and it is a very important element."<sup>30</sup>

The JSP addressed the major criticism of the invasion strategy directly and attempted to compare the casualty rates of amphibious operations with those of protracted land warfare. Arguing that the average casualty rate per thousand per day of Pacific amphibious assaults was 7.45, versus 2.16 in the European theater of operations, the planners concluded that the JCS should "limit the number of separate assault operations" and focus on "land operations in decisive areas." Because a comparison of the forces required for the two strategies revealed that they were roughly equivalent, this analysis of expected casualty rates, vitally important in the consideration of home front morale, also supported the invasion strategy.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup>JPS Report, JCS 924/15, "Pacific Strategy," 25 April 1945, RG 165, ABC 384 Pacific (1-17-43), sec 9.

<sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*; Lincoln memorandum for Bissell, 14 April 1945, RG 165, ABC 384 Pacific (1-17-43).

<sup>31</sup>See the sources in the previous footnote. In reaching the figures for amphibious assaults, the JSP used data from operations in Guadalcanal, New Georgia, Leyte, Attu, the Marshalls, the Marianas, and Palau. The casualty rate included killed, wounded, and missing.

Finally, Lincoln and the JSP boldly reintroduced the suggestion that the United States should clarify for the Japanese the meaning of unconditional surrender. Observing that "the concept of unconditional surrender is foreign to the Japanese nature" and that no organized Japanese units had yet surrendered in the war, the JSP argued that "unconditional surrender should be defined in terms understandable to the Japanese," perhaps through a "declaration of intentions" by Washington. The JSP concluded that a declaration of this sort might convince the Japanese to surrender, once they had been convinced of the inevitability of defeat. Failure to provide a definition of unconditional surrender acceptable to the Japanese meant that there would be "no alternative to annihilation and no prospect that the threat of absolute defeat will bring about capitulation." Unconditional surrender would therefore have to be delivered by invasion.<sup>32</sup>

King's tame acceptance of the JSP paper on 2 May was deceptive. In fact he was merely changing tactics and thereby postponing any resolution of the debate. The JSP plan for early invasion called for an air-sea blockade to be applied first, with an invasion to follow "at the earliest practicable date." Because King thought that Japan would fall before an invasion was necessary, he was prepared to allow the JCS to issue an operational directive to begin preparations for an invasion. Establishing 1 November 1945 as the date for the invasion of Kyushu, the JCS directed MacArthur and Nimitz to intensify the air-sea blockade and the bombardment of Japan with the objective of "establishing conditions favorable to the decisive invasion of the industrial heart of Japan." OLYMPIC's principal purpose was thus to establish bases and staging areas to support CORONET in March 1946.<sup>33</sup>

In June the growing American casualty list resulting from the tenacious Japanese resistance on Okinawa generated still another high-level review of the invasion decision. Appalled by the specter of "an Okinawa from one end of Japan to the other," President Harry S. Truman called a conference of the JCS, the secretary of war, and the secretary of the navy to determine "how far we could afford to go in the Japanese campaign." Truman's instinctive misgivings about invasion mirrored those of his predecessor. Although Roosevelt had not participated directly in the invasion debate, at Yalta in February he had confided privately to Stalin that he intended to bomb the Japanese into submission "and thus save American lives." Roosevelt "hoped it would not be necessary to actually invade the Japanese islands and would do so only if absolutely necessary." On 14 June 1945 the JCS learned that these were President Truman's sentiments as well. Admiral William D. Leahy, Truman's representative on the JCS, notified his colleagues that it was Truman's intention "to make his decisions on the campaign with the purpose of

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<sup>32</sup>See the sources cited in footnote 30.

<sup>33</sup>King memorandum, JCS 924/16, "Pacific Strategy," 2 May 1945, RG 165, ABC 384 Pacific (1-17-43), sec 9; Fleet Admiral Ernest J. King and Walter Muir Whitehill, *Fleet Admiral King: A Naval Record* (New York, 1952), 605; JCS message to MacArthur and Nimitz, CM-OUT-87938, 25 May 1945, Marshall Papers, box 75, folder: 2.

economizing to the maximum extent possible in the loss of American lives. Economy in use of time and in money cost is comparably unimportant.”<sup>34</sup>

Leahy’s memorandum implied that the president might be giving the JCS new political guidance about how to proceed with the campaign against Japan. The admiral had suggested the need to seek such guidance from the White House as early as September 1944; now it seemed that Truman was taking the initiative, issuing guidelines that replaced the emphasis on obtaining a speedy unconditional surrender with an emphasis on minimizing casualties. The need to clarify the president’s new guidelines—if that was what they were—provided the focus for the JCS meeting with Truman in the White House on 18 June.<sup>35</sup>

Although Lincoln was not present at this key meeting, his strategic perspective was clearly represented in Marshall’s line of argument to Truman. Marshall took the lead in the discussions and urged strongly that OLYMPIC be undertaken on 1 November as scheduled; its success, he suggested, might obviate the need for CORONET. Arguing that the Kyushu operation “appears to be the least costly worth-while operation following Okinawa,” he asserted that OLYMPIC was essential to both an effective blockade and an invasion of Japan and that to postpone invasion beyond 1 November would probably mean that Japan’s defeat would be “delayed for up to six months” because of inclement winter weather.<sup>36</sup>

Marshall spoke at length on the subject of casualties. He called attention to the “grim fact that there is not an easy, bloodless way to victory in war.” Nonetheless, he said, MacArthur had assured him that OLYMPIC presented fewer “hazards of excessive loss than any other [plan] . . . suggested,” and the War Department staff believed that casualties in the first month would not exceed the thirty-one thousand killed, wounded, and missing in the Luzon campaign. Marshall also subtly reminded the president of the strategic significance of an anxious and uneasy home front. The decision to invade was a difficult and “thankless task,” but one that was necessary to maintenance of the American people’s resolve. In Marshall’s view, postponing that task risked eroding public support for national war aims. “Any irresolution in the leaders,” he warned, “may result in costly weakening and indecision in the subordinates.” The invasion of Kyushu was “the only course to pursue,” he concluded, and “every individual moving to the Pacific should be indoctrinated with a firm determination to see it through.”<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>34</sup>JCS minutes of a meeting held at the White House, 18 June 1945 at 1530, RG 218, CCS 334 Joint Chiefs of Staff Meetings (2-2-45); Minutes of Roosevelt-Stalin meeting, 8 February 1945, *FRUS, The Conferences at Malta and Yalta* (Washington, 1955), 766; Leahy diary entry, 8 February 1945, Leahy Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, DC; Leahy memorandum to JCS, 14 June 1945, cited in Department of Defense, *The Entry of the Soviet Union into the War against Japan: Military Plans, 1941-45* (Washington, 1955), 76.

<sup>35</sup>Minutes of JCS 172d meeting, 5 September 1944, RG 218, CCS 334 Joint Chiefs of Staff Meetings (7-4-44).

<sup>36</sup>JCS minutes of a meeting held at the White House, 18 June 1945, RG 218, CCS 334 Joint Chiefs of Staff Meetings (2-2-45).

<sup>37</sup>JCS minutes of a meeting held at the White House, 18 June 1945, RG 218, CCS 334 Joint Chiefs of Staff Meetings (2-2-45). For an example of the army’s indoctrination effort

Conceding that "the more he studied the matter, the more he was impressed with the strategic location of Kyushu," King strongly supported Marshall's call for OLYMPIC, believing still, in any case, that it was essential to the siege strategy. Planning for CORONET should go on, he thought, for otherwise the United States would "never be able to accomplish it," but the final decision for the Honshu landings could be made later. Marshall quickly agreed, as did Secretary of the Navy James V. Forrestal and Lieutenant General Ira C. Eaker, who was representing Army Air Forces Chief of Staff General H. H. Arnold.<sup>38</sup>

Leahy, however, remained unconvinced and brought the discussion back to the subject of casualties. In his view, Okinawa and Kyushu were comparable operations. Because American casualties on Okinawa had approached 35 percent of the invasion force, he wondered if that might not "give a good estimate of the casualties to be expected" on Kyushu and asked how many troops were to be used in the operation. Afraid that Leahy might imply that there was a straight mathematical relationship between the two operations in an effort to shock Truman, King retorted that Kyushu offered "much more room for maneuver" than Okinawa and estimated that casualties would fall between those on Luzon (31,000) and those on Okinawa (41,700 to date). Although Leahy remained unconvinced, Truman was apparently satisfied that the casualty issue had been resolved. With little further discussion and without raising the key question of timing, the president announced that it was clear that the JCS "were still of the unanimous opinion that the Kyushu operation was the best solution under the circumstances," that they "could go ahead with it," and that CORONET's fate could be decided later.<sup>39</sup>

Nothing that Truman had said suggested the new political guidance on unconditional surrender that Leahy had intimated was forthcoming. Disappointed, and aware that the continued emphasis on the political aim of speedy unconditional surrender made approval of OLYMPIC virtually inevitable, Leahy boldly tried to stimulate a reassessment of the aim of unconditional surrender. In his view, he told Truman, the failure to force Japan's unconditional surrender would not mean that the United States had achieved less than a complete victory. Indeed, even with a negotiated

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see "Army Orientation Fact Sheet," No. 71, 12 May 1945, RG 165, ABC 384. Marshall's staff apparently adjusted MacArthur's estimate downward from fifty thousand in the first thirty days of OLYMPIC to what they called "a balanced estimate" of thirty thousand. MacArthur's total estimated casualties through for the first ninety days of the campaign were 104,000 dead, wounded, and missing. Lincoln termed this figure "a conservative figure on the topside," meaning that MacArthur sought to use it as the worst case for planning evacuation and replacement flow. See Lincoln memorandum for Hull, 18 June 1945, George A. Lincoln Papers, box 2, USMA Library.

<sup>38</sup>JCS minutes of a meeting held in the White House, 18 June 1945, RG 218, CCS 334 Joint Chiefs of Staff Meetings (2-2-45).

<sup>39</sup>Ibid. Leahy recorded that day that Marshall was of the opinion that the Kyushu casualties "will not cost us more than 63,000 of the 190,000 combatant troops estimated as necessary for the operation." See Leahy diary entry, 18 June 1945, Leahy Papers. For evidence that the JCS had concluded that timing remained a significant strategic parameter see JCS memorandum, CCS 880/4, "Development of Operations in the Pacific," 29 June 1945, RG 165, ABC 384 Pacific (1-17-43), sec 9.

settlement, "he feared no menace from Japan in the foreseeable future." Japan was already thoroughly defeated and would no longer be a military threat; the United States could thereby modify its demand for unconditional surrender without injuring its security interests. What Leahy did fear was "that our insistence on unconditional surrender would result only in making the Japanese desperate and thereby increase our casualty lists." Leahy stopped short of explicitly advocating a shift in American policy toward a negotiated settlement with Japan, but his logic was clear.<sup>40</sup>

The president apparently had considered such a reassessment, but had dismissed it as too explosive politically. Indicating that "he had left the door open for Congress to take appropriate action with reference to unconditional surrender," Truman explained that he could not "take any action at this time to change public opinion on the matter." Having been president for only two short months, and perhaps recalling the standing ovation given his reaffirmation of the policy of unconditional surrender during his first address to Congress on 16 April 1945, Truman was reluctant to modify one of his predecessor's key policies. For their part, the JCS could only conclude that their objective remained the speedy unconditional surrender of Japan.<sup>41</sup>

The significance of this 18 June meeting lay not only in the president's confirmation of the decision to invade Kyushu. Although the JCS never actively resumed the assault versus siege debate, the discussion in the White House also served to remind the army of the high human costs of invasion and prompted it to try to moderate those costs. To put it differently, while a strictly military assessment of the strategic situation in June 1945 led the JCS to recommend invasion, concerns about American casualties and the steadiness of the home front also led army strategists to acknowledge the need to do everything in their power to mitigate the costs of invasion.

Marshall believed that if anything "short of complete military defeat" could make the Japanese realize the hopelessness of their situation and capitulate, it would be relentless bombardment and blockade, "a landing on Japan indicating the firmness of our resolution," and Soviet entry or the threat of Soviet entry into the Pacific war. It was tacitly understood that the atomic bomb, still an uncertainty, might play a part in the bombardment. Therefore, Marshall thought, increased military efforts might yet create the conditions that would induce the Japanese to surrender short of a battle of annihilation.<sup>42</sup> Although Leahy cooled on the issue late in the war, Marshall and the other Joint Chiefs consistently championed early Soviet entry into the Pacific war precisely because of the strategic and psychological blow that Soviet

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<sup>40</sup>JCS minutes of a meeting held at the White House, 18 June 1945, RG 218, CCS 334 Joint Chiefs of Staff Meetings (2-2-45). See also Leahy diary entry, 18 June 1945, Leahy Papers.

<sup>41</sup>JCS minutes of a meeting held at the White House, 18 June 1945, RG 218, CCS 334 Joint Chiefs of Staff Meetings (2-2-45); Harry S. Truman, *Memoirs, Volume 1, Year of Decisions* (Garden City, 1955), 42.

<sup>42</sup>JCS minutes of a meeting held at the White House, 18 June 1945, RG 218, CCS 334 Joint Chiefs of Staff Meetings (2-2-45).

intervention would inflict upon Japan.<sup>43</sup> The JCS also appreciated the key role that the Soviets would play in dealing with the huge Japanese Kwantung Army, a consideration Stimson stressed to Marshall when they discussed home front morale. The secretary of war did not believe "that the country would stand for the sending of large numbers of American troops to the [Asian] mainland." Roosevelt had agreed, telling Stimson firmly that "we must leave it to the Russians."<sup>44</sup> Nonetheless, the JCS avoided linking the timing of the invasion to Soviet entry in the war because they knew that the Soviets would intervene only if they determined it was in their interest to do so and because, as one adviser told Marshall, such linkage "would in effect surrender the conduct of the war against Japan to the military and political direction of the Soviets." Still, the JCS, spurred on by concerns about the home front, concluded that "the only way" to speed the Soviet Union's entry into the war was "to make it apparent to her that Japan's total defeat is imminent" and that Russian "aspirations on the Asiatic mainland" might therefore be threatened. Operation OLYMPIC might convince the Soviets that Japan was on the point of defeat, while demonstrating to the Japanese the steadiness of American resolve.<sup>45</sup>

Another way to mitigate the costs of invasion was to negotiate surrender with the Japanese. For some months the War and State departments had been trying to clarify the unconditional surrender dictum by inserting clauses assuring the Japanese that they could retain the imperial institution. With few exceptions, the JCS had been content to let Stimson, Acting Secretary of State Joseph C. Grew, and Assistant Secretary of War John J. McCloy deal with that tricky political problem.<sup>46</sup>

By early July, however, Marshall and the army—with Lincoln as the principal army representative—were more aggressively pursuing ways to secure unconditional surrender while avoiding the enormous human cost of

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<sup>43</sup>On JCS support for Soviet entry see Embick memorandum for Marshall, "US Policy in re Russian Participation in the War against Japan," 30 September 1944, Marshall Papers, box 67, folder: 40; JCS memorandum for the president, 23 January 1945, RG 165, ABC 384 USSR (9-25-44), sec 1B; Stimson to Grew, 21 May 1945, Records of the Office of the Secretary of War, Record Group 107, Stimson TS Safe File, folder: Russia, National Archives (hereafter RG 107, with filing information); Leahy diary entries, 5 April, 11 May, and 17, 28, and 29 July 1945, Leahy Papers. See also Department of Defense, *Entry of the Soviet Union*, 28–107; and Louis Morton, "Soviet Intervention in the War with Japan," *Foreign Affairs* 40 (July 1962): 653–62.

<sup>44</sup>Stimson diary entry, 13 October 1944, Henry L. Stimson Papers, Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut.

<sup>45</sup>Handy memorandum for Marshall, "US Policy in re Russian Participation in the War Against Japan," 1 October 1944, RG 165, ABC 384 USSR (9-25-44), sec 1A.

<sup>46</sup>Joseph C. Grew memorandum of conversation, "Appointment with the President, 12:35 P.M.," 28 May 1945, Grew Papers, Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts; Grew memorandum of conversation, "Possible inclusion in President's forthcoming speech of statement on Japan," 29 May 1945, Grew Papers. See also Joseph C. Grew, *Turbulent Era: A Diplomatic Record of Forty Years, 1904–1945*, 2 vols. (Boston, 1952), 2:1421–37; Grew to Stimson, 12 February 1947, and Stimson to Grew, 19 June 1947, Grew Papers. For Stimson and McCloy's involvement see minutes of meeting of the Committee of Three (Stimson, Grew, and Forrestal), 12 June 1945, RG 107, Stimson TS Safe File, folder: State, War, Navy Minutes.



invasion. They were once again focusing upon the question of timing. Lincoln wrote Lieutenant General A. C. Wedemeyer, a former colleague in OPD and now commanding general, China theater, that the Japanese might surrender without an invasion "providing we can get an adequate formula defining unconditional surrender." The army strategists had developed such a definition and had sent it "through channels to the President." The key question now was when best to transmit that new definition to the Japanese. Lincoln believed that there were "two psychological days" remaining in the war: "the day after we persuade Russia to enter" and "the day after we get what the Japs recognize as a secure beachhead in Japan." Providing they understood the new definition of surrender, Lincoln believed that the Japanese might capitulate "around either of those times."<sup>47</sup>

Lincoln worked closely with McCloy as the assistant secretary of war attempted to translate Stimson's and Grew's ideas about clarifying the meaning of unconditional surrender into practical recommendations. Throughout June and July, Lincoln, aides from the Strategy and Policy Group, and other members of the JCS participated in the drafting of what became the Potsdam Proclamation. For the civilians in the policy process, the central issue remained the question of preserving the imperial institution.<sup>48</sup> The Joint Chiefs concentrated their efforts more on influencing the timing of the declaration than on its political substance. Once again, this emphasis illustrated their understanding that questions about military operations were linked to domestic political considerations, albeit in a complex way. "Shall we time the declaration in some relation to active operations, for their effect on Japanese thinking," Lincoln asked during the interdepartmental discussions over the Stimson-Grew proposal, "or during a period of prolonged inactivity to help sustain U.S. morale?" The first part of the question reflected concerns of a strictly military nature; the latter revealed Lincoln's sensitivity to the constraints imposed upon strategy in a democratic society.<sup>49</sup>

A closer examination of this two-part question illustrates just how inseparable the political-military aspects of American strategy had become. Lincoln understood that if the demand for Japan's surrender, which would include a clarification of unconditional surrender, was to have its greatest psychological impact—that is, was to make its greatest contribution to delivering a Japanese surrender without an invasion—it should be coupled with other significant blows to the Japanese, such as the entry of the Soviet Union into the war, the establishment of a secure beachhead on Kyushu, or the beginning of "a more drastic phase" of the bombardment campaign. (The last was an oblique reference to the atomic bomb.) The Soviets could enter the war anytime after 8 August; the Kyushu invasion was scheduled for 1 November; and the atomic bomb might be available in early August, if testing proved successful. Lincoln knew that the Joint Chiefs and the army in particular were

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<sup>47</sup>Lincoln to Wedemeyer, 10 July 1945, Lincoln Papers, box 5, folder: Wedemeyer.

<sup>48</sup>Brian L. Villa, "The U.S. Army, Unconditional Surrender, and the Potsdam Proclamation," *Journal of American History* 63 (June 1976): 87–92.

<sup>49</sup>Lincoln memorandum for Hull, "Demand for Japanese Surrender," 29 June 1945, Lincoln Papers, box 2, folder: May–June 1945.

seeking ways to moderate the cost of the invasion option. He himself was concerned about tying the proclamation inviting Japan to surrender to OLYMPIC chronologically, because he feared the Japanese might then use the proclamation to mobilize their people. Therefore, he recommended that the United States issue its demand for surrender "some weeks prior to the invasion." He concluded that militarily and psychologically "the best time" for the demand would be "immediately after Russia's entry into the war particularly if this event coincided with . . . the approaching peak of the bombardment operations," that is, from mid- to late August.<sup>50</sup>

But delaying the proclamation until August involved risks that troubled the JCS. The Japanese sent out a number of peace feelers in June and July 1945, and the JCS feared that they might call for a negotiated settlement. With American morale flagging, such an offer might be "politically and psychologically difficult to refuse." Therefore, the JCS thought it would be a good idea to demand surrender immediately, using a clarified formula. As the army had pointed out earlier in May, "such a demand would forestall a Japanese peace offer." The State Department saw the logic of this reasoning. E. H. Dooman, a State Department adviser, told Acting Secretary of State Grew in June that an early call for Japan's immediate unconditional surrender "would . . . prevent the Japanese from exploiting the psychological depression that would be expected to occur" from the redeployment of forces from the European theater. In short, he added, "the proposed communication . . . would in reality address itself to the maintaining of American morale." Dooman believed that maintaining morale on the home front was important, and he warned Grew that the State Department "should not stand in the way" if the Joint Chiefs of Staff felt that "some action is necessary to maintain safeguards against any psychological depression in this country." In addition to forestalling a psychologically debilitating Japanese peace offer, an immediate call for Japan's unconditional surrender might bolster morale in another way. A Japanese rejection of the surrender demand would make it clear to the American people that there was no alternative but to fight to the end and would help motivate them to see the war through.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup>Marshall memorandum for Stimson, 7 June 1945, Marshall Papers, box 84, folder: 29; [Lincoln] memorandum for McCloy, 29 June 1945, "Timing of Proposed Demand for Japanese Surrender," 29 June 1945, with McCloy memorandum for Stimson, 29 June 1945, RG 107, Stimson TS Safe File, folder: July 1940–September 1945, Japan after December 1941. For a different perspective on army thinking about timing see Villa, "U. S. Army," 86–87.

<sup>51</sup>Ray S. Cline, "Military Use of the Atomic Bomb," [17 September 1946], Lincoln Papers, box 2, folder: September–October 1946; E. H. Dooman memorandum for Grew, 11 June 1945, General Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59, 740.0011 PW (Peace)/6-1145, National Archives (hereafter RG 59, with filing information). Cline's study was a result of a request from the secretary of war in August 1946. An edited version formed the basis of chap. 17 of his *Washington Command Post*. The extent of Japanese peace feelers in June and early July is summarized in Joseph W. Ballantine memorandum for Grew, "Japanese 'Peace Feelers'," 5 July 1945, RG 59, 740.00119 PW/7-545; and Grew for Secretary of State James F. Byrnes, 13 July 1945, with State Department Press Release No. 547, 10 July 1945, RG 59, 740.00119 PW/7-1345.

Demonstrating their political awareness once again, army strategists decided to press for an early call for surrender along the lines of the Stimson-Grew proposal. But bitter debate within the State Department over the issue of the retention of the imperial institution and the pressures of the impending Big Three meeting at Potsdam delayed the declaration until 26 July and virtually ensured that it would be an emasculated version of the proclamation the army strategists had been working on, with no mention of the emperor's status.<sup>52</sup>

Japanese Premier Kantaro Suzuki's rejection of the Potsdam Declaration on 29 July led inexorably to the series of blows American strategists had hoped for. The first atomic bomb destroyed Hiroshima on 6 August; two days later the Soviet Union declared war on Japan and invaded Manchuria; and on the following day the United States dropped the second atomic bomb on Nagasaki. Japan's surrender on 14 August 1945, following a personal intervention by Emperor Hirohito, was predicated on American assurances that Japan could retain the imperial institution. Although the issue had been the focus of dispute during the preceding months, the Truman administration did not resurrect the debate. It provided the needed reassurances, and the great war against Japan came to an end.<sup>53</sup>

The debate within the JCS over the best strategy to use against Japan—assault or siege—illustrated the degree to which political considerations influenced the strategic judgments of the JCS in the Pacific war. The Joint Chiefs clearly accepted the primacy of policy in the policy-strategy equation. They also understood that the political aim of the nation often, as Clausewitz put it, “must adapt itself to its chosen means, a process which can radically change it.”<sup>54</sup> But defining the nation's political aim—or redefining it—was a civil rather than a military prerogative. The JCS could identify the strategic considerations that would affect the political aim, as Leahy attempted to do at the JCS meeting with Truman on 18 June or Marshall and Lincoln did when they supported efforts to clarify the meaning of unconditional surrender, but their principal role was to devise a military strategy that would obtain the political object of the war within the constraints given.

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<sup>52</sup>“Proclamation by the Heads of the Governments, United States, China and the United Kingdom,” 26 July 1945, *FRUS, The Conference of Berlin (The Potsdam Conference)*, 1945, 2 vols. (Washington, 1960), 2:1474–76; Villa, “U. S. Army,” 66–92; Henry L. Stimson, “The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb,” *Harper's Magazine* 194 (February 1947): 102–5; Grew, *Turbulent Era* 2:1424–28; Cordell Hull, *The Memoirs of Cordell Hull*, 2 vols. (New York, 1948), 2:1594–95; Truman, *Year of Decisions*, 417. See also Waldo H. Heinrichs, Jr., *American Ambassador: Joseph C. Grew and the Development of the United States Diplomatic Tradition* (Boston, 1966), 372–79; and Kenneth M. Glazier, Jr., “The Decision to Use Atomic Weapons against Hiroshima and Nagasaki,” *Public Policy* 18 (Summer 1970): 489–98.

<sup>53</sup>Kazuo Kawai, “Mokusatsu, Japan's Response to the Potsdam Declaration,” *Pacific Historical Review* 19 (November 1950): 409–14; Sigal, *Fighting to a Finish*, 224–81; Butow, *Japan's Decision to Surrender*, 142–49, 166–78, 189–209; James F. Byrnes, *Speaking Frankly* (New York, 1947), 209. On the Soviet offensive in Manchuria see David M. Glantz, *August Storm: The Soviet 1945 Strategic Offensive in Manchuria* (Fort Leavenworth, KS, 1983). See also Charles F. Brower, “Assault versus Siege: The Debate over Final Strategy for the Defeat of Japan, 1943–1945,” *Joint Perspectives* 2 (Spring 1982): 72–83.

<sup>54</sup>Clausewitz, *On War*, 87.

The motives of the JCS were complex. Frequently expressed in terms of military considerations, they nonetheless were imbued with a deeply political awareness of national war aims and the pressures of the home front. The JCS understood that Japan's defeat would result from the increasing application of military, psychological, and political pressures, and their strategy clearly reflected that understanding. They gradually tightened the blockade; they bombed Japan relentlessly with conventional and atomic weapons; they contributed to efforts to induce an early Japanese capitulation through a clarification of the unconditional surrender formula; and they strongly urged two presidents to try to persuade the Soviets to join the war against Japan as soon as possible.

That the cumulative effect of these pressures produced Japan's unconditional surrender without an invasion in no way invalidated the strategic reasoning of Lincoln and the army strategists. Lincoln observed after the war that although "the final outcome was certain and the broad strategic concept was clear," the JCS were much less certain about "the exact sequence or the extent of the impact of each major action bringing pressure on the Japanese." In particular, the timing of Soviet entry was beyond the control of the United States, although the JCS did everything they could to orchestrate it. More important, little was known about the atomic bomb. As one Truman adviser recalled after the war, "The big question was not whether the bomb was going to be used, the big question in those spring and early summer months of 1945 was 'Will the bomb work?' *That* was the question." Moreover, even after both atomic bombs had been dropped, few appreciated their true strategic significance. Marshall's intelligence officer, for example, advised him on 12 August that the "atomic bombs will not have a decisive effect in the next 30 days."<sup>55</sup>

These uncertainties troubled American strategists who were concerned about the resolve of the home front and generated a sense of urgency that clashed with their desire to minimize American casualties. The JCS never actually resolved the resulting strategic dilemma; it was settled by Japanese actions. Clearly seeking to avoid the enormous human cost of invasion, proponents of assault and siege alike hoped that the combination of military, psychological, and political pressures and incentives leading up to invasion would deliver what Lincoln later called some "form of a negotiated unconditional surrender."<sup>56</sup>

But only Marshall and army strategists like Lincoln remained committed to the invasion strategy to the end. That commitment revealed once again the important relationship between military and political considerations in their thinking. From a purely military perspective, it was prudent to begin planning

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<sup>55</sup>Lincoln memorandum for Cline, "Comment on Study Prepared by P[lanes] & O[perations] Historian Concerning Historical Facts Related to the Use of the Atomic Bomb," 11 October 1946, Lincoln Papers, box 2 (September–October 1946) (hereafter Lincoln Comments on Special Historical Study); George M. Elsey Oral History (1985), 16–22, Harry S. Truman Library, Independence, Missouri (emphasis in original); Major General Clayton Bissell memorandum for Marshall, "Estimate of Japanese Situation for the Next 30 Days," 12 August 1945, RG 165, Exec 2, Item 11, OPD Exec Office Files.

<sup>56</sup>Lincoln Comments on Special Historical Study.

early for an invasion of the scale and complexity of OLYMPIC-CORONET. Moreover, invasion offered an opportunity to close with and defeat decisively the Japanese armies, and that was the traditional military route to total victory.

The political arguments for the invasion strategy were even more compelling to the JCS and especially to the army. First, the Allied preparation for invasion might very well have had an important psychological effect on the Japanese as they considered whether to capitulate or to brave invasion. More important, the army felt strongly that executing OLYMPIC on schedule would help them maintain both the military and the political initiative against Japan. Maintenance of the political initiative loomed large in army calculations because of concerns about the steadiness of the home front. Lincoln argued after the war that for the psychological well-being of the American people "it was most important that the Japanese be given no opportunity to play for time." Any respites in the attack against Japan would provide time "during which . . . the Japanese might confuse and weaken the resolution of the allies by peace feelers, or strengthen their defenses to the point where assaults would become very costly, or both." Invasion alone reconciled the military and political objectives of national policy. Its strong endorsement by the JCS—especially Marshall and his visionary aide, Lincoln—is a vivid illustration of the Clausewitzian sophistication of American strategists in the war with Japan.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>57</sup>Ibid.